Pitcher Lane Proposed Residential Development:

Environmental Report

FLYNN FURNEY
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

Report for Craftstudio Architects

September 2022

The derelict dwelling at Pitcher Lane, August 2022.

Note

Works, plans, methodologies, materials, and infrastructural requirements are based on the client's brief, draft plans, and drawings provided to Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants as of August 2022.

Statement of Authority

This Appropriate Assessment Screening has been carried out by suitably qualified and experienced professionals of Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. These were Billy Flynn BSc, MSc, MCIEEM, CEnv. and David McCormick, Bsc, PhD.

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1 Introduction

Appropriate Assessment Screening

Flynn Furney has been commissioned by Craftstudio Architects to carry out a Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report for a proposed residential development project at Pitcher Lane, Kells, Co. Meath. The purpose of this project is to the refurbishment and reuse of the currently derelict Market House and the improvement of the public realm surrounding the building.

This screening exercise aims to determine whether the proposed construction and operation of the residential development may have the potential to impact the conservation objectives and overall integrity of any Natura 2000 sites significantly or indeterminately. This assessment is based upon desk research and fieldwork carried out by suitably qualified ecologists.

This report has been completed to provide information regarding the ecological status of the proposed site of works. This report has also been completed to provide the information necessary to allow the competent authority to conduct an Article 6[3] Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening of the proposed development. The legislation and methodology for this are detailed in the following sections.

Environmental Impact Assessment

Council Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment ('the EIA Directive') is designed to ensure that projects likely to have significant effects on the environmental are subject to a comprehensive assessment of their environmental effects prior to development consent being given. The proposed development is not a development type listed under Part 1 or 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) nor is it considered a sub-threshold development for the purposes of Schedule 7 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and will not on its own or cumulatively with other projects result in significant effects on the environment and as such an EIAR is not required.

1.1 Relevant Legislation and Overall Screening Methodology

The methodology for this screening statement is set out in a document prepared for the Environment DG of the European Commission entitled 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC' (European Commission, 2019). This report and any contributory fieldwork were carried out in

accordance with guidelines given by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009, amended 2010).

The process is given in Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and is commonly referred to as 'Appropriate Assessments' (which in fact refers to Stage 2 in the sequence under the Habitats Directive Article 6 assessment). Article 6 of the Habitats Directive sets out provisions which govern the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the (Natura2000) site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public."

Article 6(4) of the same directive states:
"If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest."

It is the responsibility of the proponent of the plan or project to provide the relevant information (ecological surveys, research, analysis etc.) for submission to the 'competent national authority'. Having satisfied itself that the information is complete and objective, the competent authority will use this information to screen the project, i.e. to determine if an AA is required and to carry out the AA, if one is deemed necessary. The competent authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned. The appropriate assessment process has four stages. Each stage

determines whether a further stage in the process is required. If, for example, the conclusions at the end of Stage One are that there will be no significant impacts on the Natura 2000 site, there is no requirement to proceed further. The four stages are:

1. Screening to determine if an appropriate assessment is required.
2. Appropriate assessment
3. Consideration of alternative solutions
4. Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest/Derogation

Stage 1: Screening

This is to determine if an appropriate assessment is required. Screening is the technique applied to determine whether a particular plan would be likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site and would thus warrant an Appropriate Assessment. The key indicator that will determine if an Appropriate Assessment is required is the determination of whether the development is likely to have significant environmental effects on a Natura 2000 site or not.

Stage 2. Appropriate Assessment

This step is required if the screening report indicates that the development is likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site. Stage 2 assesses the impact of a plan or project on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, with respect to the site's structure, function and conservation objectives. Where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of these impacts is also required.

Stage 3. Assessment of Alternative Solutions

If it is concluded that, subsequent to the implementation of measures, a plan or project will have an adverse impact on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site, it must be objectively concluded that no alternative solutions exist before the plan or project can proceed.

Stage 4. Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest/Derogation

Where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain but imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) exist for the implementation of a plan or project, an assessment of compensatory measures that will effectively offset the damage to the Natura 2000 site will be necessary.

1.2 Case Law

The European Court of Justice has made a number of relevant rulings in relation to when an Appropriate Assessment is required and its purpose: "*Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site is to be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on that site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects*" and that the plan or project may only be authorised "*where no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects*".

A list of relevant rulings is provided below:

Table 1: Case law relevant to the AA Screening for the Proposed Development

Case	Ruling
People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17)	The ruling of the CJEU in this case requires that any conclusion of 'no Likely Significant Effect' on a European site must be made prior to any consideration of measures to avoid or reduce harm to the European site. The determination of Likely Significant Effects should not, in the opinion of the CJEU, constitute an attempt at detailed technical analyses. This should be conducted as part of the AA.
Waddenzee (C-127/02)	The ruling in this case clarified that AA must be conducted using best scientific knowledge, and that there must be no reasonable scientific doubt in the conclusions drawn. The Waddenzee ruling also provided clarity on the definition of 'significant effect', which would be any effect from a plan or project which is likely to undermine the conservation objectives of any European site.
Holohan and Others v An Bord Pleanála (C-461/17)	The conclusions of the Court in this case was that consideration must be given during AA to: effects on qualifying habitats and/or species of a SAC or SPA, even when occurring outside of the boundary of a European site, if these are relevant to the site meeting its conservation objectives; and, effects on non-qualifying habitats and/or species on which the qualifying habitats and/or species depend and which could result in adverse effects on the integrity of the European site.

T.C Briels and Others v Minister van Infrastructuur en Milieu (C-521/12)	The ruling of the CJEU in this case determined that compensatory measures cannot be used to support a conclusion of no adverse effect on site integrity.

1.3 Guidance Documents

This report has been prepared with regard to the following guidance documents on Appropriate Assessment, where relevant:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10;
- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2001 and updates April 2015 and September 2021). The guidance within this document provides a non-mandatory methodology for carrying out assessments required under Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive;
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2018); and
- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle. European Commission (2000). · OPR (2021) Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. Practice Note PN01. Office of the Planning Regulator. March 2021.

1.4 Statement of Authority

Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants have 20 plus years of experience in ecological surveying and management. We have detailed knowledge on the principles and implementation of both Irish and European environmental legislation. We have worked closely with statutory bodies including the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Waterways Ireland on habitat management and protection projects. Other expertise includes Ecological Impact Assessment, Habitat and Floral Surveys, Bird Surveying, Bat Surveying, Fish and Waterways surveys.

1.5 The Proposed Site of Project

The proposed works are to be located within the town of Kells, Co. Meath. See Appendix A, Fig. 1. The area for works is within a built-up area close to the centre of the town at Pitcher Lane (673966, 776141 ITM). Pitcher Lane adjoins the R147 (Carrick Road) to the south and Colmcille's Villas to the north. It is a residential area (see following section and Appendix A).

1.6 Project Objectives and Description of Works

The project under assessment is a residential development. It will involve the demolition of an existing derelict 2-storey house and the clearance of curtilage and vegetation here. Following this, it is proposed that 2 no. two bedroom two storey units and 2 no. one bedroom apartments will be constructed in a terraced block on the eastern side of the site. Another detached unit comprising a one bedroom single storey will be built as a detached property toward the west of the site. The completed development will connect to the public foul sewer as well as to the public mains water supply. Ancillary site works will include the creation of permeable paved parking spaces, site surface water drainage, creation of shared pedestrian and vehicular access space and external (concrete) stairs to access parking areas and shared space. The boundary will be reinstated with a concrete post and timber rail fence along the southern, northern and western boundaries of the site. The western (front) boundary will be a stone wall constructed from stone salvaged from an existing stone wall here. Landscaping of site will be carried out including a mixture of native and non-native species.

1.7 Methodologies

This screening report was informed by a desk study of all relevant environmental information and also included a review of the ecological field survey data recorded during survey In July 2022. The screening then incorporated the following steps (broadly based on EC [2000]) to:

- Determine if the proposed works are directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site;
- Describe the proposed works;
- Describe the baseline environment;
- List 'Relevant' European sites which are those sites potentially connected to the proposed works by source-pathway-receptor linkages; and
- Conclude if linkages to 'Relevant' sites have the potential to give rise to Likely Significant Effects (LSE).

1.8 The Source-Pathway-Receptor Model

The standard 'source-pathway-receptor' conceptual model is a standard tool in environmental assessment. In order for an effect to occur, all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or

removal of one of the elements of the mechanism means there is no likelihood for the effect to occur. An example of this model is provided below:

- Source (s); – e.g. Piling;
- Pathway (s); e.g. Vibration; and
- Receptor (s); e.g. Underground otter resting site at risk of collapse

The model evaluates the receptors as the qualifying interests (QIs) for which individual European sites are designated, with reference to the latest conservation objectives from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website, or substitute detailed objectives from other European sites where only generic objectives are available.

European sites are at risk of significant effects as a result of the proposed works where a source-pathway-receptor link exists between any elements of the proposed works and the European site. In order for an impact to occur there must be a risk enabled by having a 'source' (e.g. proposed works), a 'receptor' (e.g. a SAC/SPA or their QI habitats/species), and a pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. a watercourse which connects the impact source at a site of proposed works to a SAC/SPA). The risk of the impact does not automatically mean it will occur, nor that it will be significant. However, identification of the risk does mean that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental impact occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the risk, and the characteristics of the receptor.

1.9 The Precautionary Principle

The Precautionary Principle has been defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2005) as: “When human activities may lead to morally unacceptable harm [to the environment] that is scientifically plausible but uncertain, actions shall be taken to avoid or diminish that harm. The judgement of plausibility should be grounded in scientific analysis". Reasoned application of the ‘Precautionary Principle’ is fundamental to the Screening Stage (and AA). The precautionary principle is referenced in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). It relates to an approach to risk management whereby if there is the possibility that a given policy or action might cause harm to the public or the environment and if there is still no scientific consensus on the issue, the policy or action in question should not be pursued.

The precautionary principle prevails where ‘reasonable scientific doubt’ cannot be ruled out. Known threats to QIs of relevant sites are analysed to avoid overlooking subtle or far-field effect pathways. The duration

of potential effects is a key consideration, in particular because the European Court of Justice has recently ruled—albeit in specific reference to priority habitats—those effects to site integrity must be "lasting."

1.10 Zones of Influence and Potential Impacts or Effects

The proposed works have the potential to result in a number of direct and indirect effects. These are set out in Table 2, which identifies the "zones of influence" for each effect (i.e. the area over which effects may occur).

Table 2: Potential impacts, effects and their zone of influence

Potential Impact and Effect	Description	Zone of Influence
Land-take resulting in habitat loss or degradation.	The permanent loss of the habitat present in the footprint of the development and access routes.	Lands within the proposed footprint of works and access routes.
Changes in water quality and quantity/distribution resulting in habitat loss or degradation.	Reduction in the quality of retained habitat or loss of habitat from surrounding areas as a result of surface water pollution.	Changes in surface water quality, as a result of works, associated with the proposed development within water courses, water bodies and or wetlands adjacent to or hydrologically connected with the of the proposed development site.
Noise & vibration resulting in disturbance to species during construction and operation of the Roadway	Direct impact on feature species reducing their ability to forage or breed.	Generally assessed within 500m of the proposed works (e.g. for wintering birds), but can be significantly lower (e.g. 150 m for Otter underground sites, or further.

1.11 Ecological Survey and Habitats

An ecological field survey of the proposed development site was carried out on the 25th August 2022. Habitat survey and mapping followed the Heritage Council's Best Practice Guidance (Smith et al. 2011). Habitats were classified according to the Heritage Councils Scheme (Fossitt, 2000).

1.11.1 Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3)

Almost all of the area proposed for works would conform to this habitat type. This is a typically species-poor habitat type and is highly modified. This includes the existing 2-storey structure that is scheduled for demolition as well as the surrounding curtilage.

Fig. 1. Area proposed for development is almost entirely built-up (BL3).

1.11.2 Flowerbeds and Borders (BC4)

This habitat type arises from the cultivation of an area (in this instance a garden) for growing decorative/horticultural plants. Plants here included a mature Holly (*Ilex aquilifolium*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster* sp.) and a cultivated variety of Hazel (*Corylus maximus Purpurea*). There was also a non-native Box (*Buxus* sp.), a variegated Privet (*Privus* sp) and Mahonia (*Mahonia* sp.). Montbretia (*Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora*) was also recorded. Flowerbeds and grassed areas had mostly been taken over by the above woody plants. In their absence, where remnant lawn exists there was Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Spear Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Red Clover (*Trofolium pratense*), Docks (*Rumex* sp.) and Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*). Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lonatus*) was the dominant grass species.

1.11.3 Scrub (WS1)

Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)-dominated scrub has also taken over sections of the garden and Great Willow-herb (*Epilobium angustifolium*) is also frequent. Field Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*) was occasional to frequent.

1.11.4 Treelines (WL2)

A treeline of Birch (*Betula* - cultivated species) and Willow (*Salix* sp.) forms a significant proportion of the northern boundary of the site. A gappy treeline of Leyland Cypress (*Cupressus X Leylandii*) is along the eastern (frontage) of the property.

Significance of Habitats and Flora

There are no Annex I habitats which occur within or surrounding the proposed study area. No rare, threatened, or protected species of plants as per the Red Data List (Wyse Jackson et al., 2016) were found. No species listed in the Flora Protection Order (2015) were found to be growing within the site. No such species were recorded within the area of works.

1.11.5 Fauna

No evidence of any protected mammal species were found onsite. Given the open nature of the boundary and the suburban setting, it is possible that the site is utilised by Hedgehogs (*Erinaceous europaeus*). While no evidence of this species was found, this is a difficult species to detect. Evidence of use of the site by Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and Domestic Cat (*Felis domesticus*) was noted. No bird nesting activity was noted within the site although it should be noted that the site would offer nesting habitat to a range of species including Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) and Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*). Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) were recorded on the roof of the property. However, no Swallow nests or nesting activity were seen within the structure. A dedicated bat survey was not carried out as part of this assessment. The previously burned and partially collapsed building is unlikely to offer suitable habitat for bats.

Significance of Fauna

No protected mammal species were recorded. While protected bird species are likely to utilise this site, no activity of same were recorded. It is not considered likely that any bird species nests within the building. Given the condition of the building, habitation by bats is considered unlikely. However, this should be confirmed by a bat specialist prior to demolition. No qualifying interests of the nearest SACs or SPAs would occur on this site.

1.12 Stakeholders and Consultation

Table 3: Summary of Consultations

Stakeholder	Nature of Consultation	Outcome
Craftstudio Architects (the client)	Telephone and email consultation: Scope and scale of project discussed. Necessity for an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report agreed.	This report generated and submitted to client
Meath County Council	Email consultation with client. Confirmation on scope of material to be included in present assessment and reporting.	This report to be supplied to Meath County Council for decision on assessment.

2 Designated Sites Ecological Assessment

2.1 Desktop Study

A desktop study was carried out as part of the screening process. This included a review of available literature on the site and its immediate environs. Sources of information included the National Parks and Wildlife Service and National Biodiversity Data Centre databases on protected sites and species.

2.2 Designated Sites

Sites designated for the conservation of nature in Ireland include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHA); and
- proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA).

SPAs and SACs form the Natura 2000 network of sites. It is these sites that are of relevance to the screening process for Appropriate Assessment.

SPAs and SACs are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. SPAs and SACs are designated under EU Habitats Directive, transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), as amended.

All Natura 2000 designated sites within 15km of the proposed development site or otherwise relevant were considered during the desktop study stage of this screening assessment in order to assess the potential for significant effects upon their Qualifying Interests / Special Conservation Interests and Conservation Objectives. This stage of the process is used to determine whether any of the designated sites may be 'screened out'. That is, that they can be regarded as not being relevant to the process, having no potential to be significantly affected or impacted upon.

2.3 Natura Designated Sites Relevant to the Proposed Works

Designated sites as described above were considered during the screening process for their potential to have significant effects upon their qualifying interests, special qualifying interests or conservation objectives. The site synopses and conservation objectives of the sites were also examined during this stage

of the survey. All designated sites with the potential for connectivity to the works area were considered. These sites are given in summary in the table below. Table 2 also gives distances from the site of works and the outcome of this initial screening.

Table 4: Distances from the proposed development site to the nearest designated sites

Site Code	Site Name	Designation	Distance from designated site	Likelihood of impact
002299	River Boyne & River Blackwater	SAC	0.82km	Possible
004232	River Boyne & River Blackwater	SPA	0.9km	Possible

Pitcher Lane Residential Development

FLYNN FURNEY ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

Client: Craftstudio

Prepared by: Billy Flynn

Date: 14/09/22

Vn. 1.0

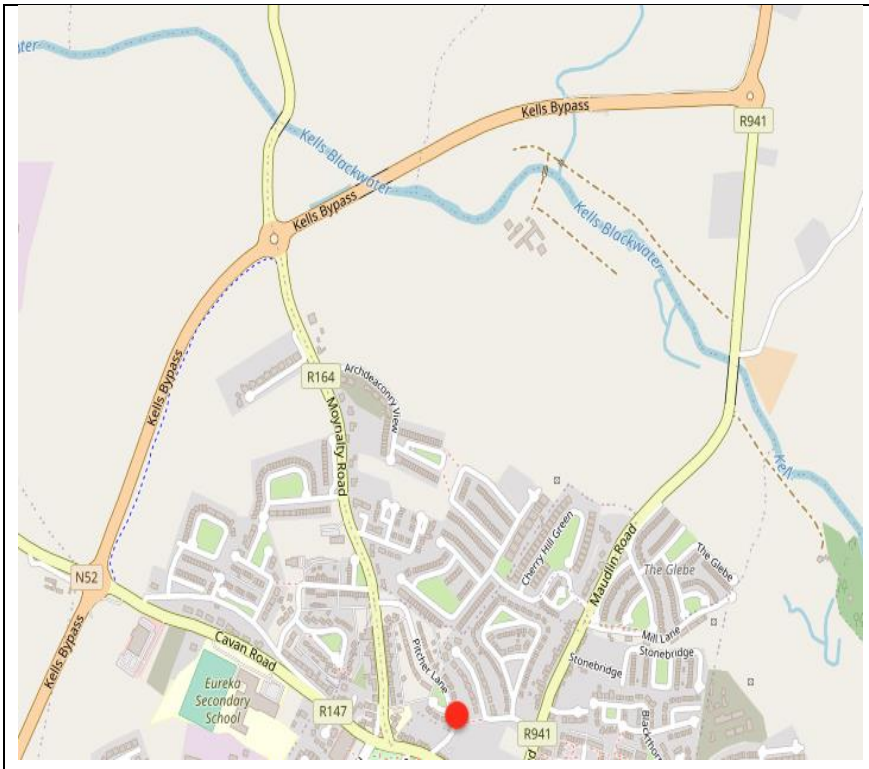
Pj: PiLa (CSA)

Base Mapping: NPWS

Figure 1: Natura Designated Sites and the Proposed Site of Works in Kells
Pink shaded areas show River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC & SPA, the nearest Natura 2000 sites

Following site survey and a review of mapping of the area, it was determined that there is no connectivity between these Natura 2000 sites and the proposed site of works. There is thus no pathway for impacts and

therefore these sites may be screened out of this assessment. See Fig. 3 and Table 2.1 below. These sites are not considered further in this assessment.



Pitcher Lane Residential Development

Watercourses

FLYNN FURNEY ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

Client: **Craftstudio**

Prepared by: Billy Flynn

Date: 14/09/22

Vn. 1.0

Pj: PiLa (CSA)

Base Mapping: EPA

Fig. 2.1 Location of site and watercourses identified in area. Red circle shows location of site at Pitcher Lane.

Table 2.1 Natura 2000 sites & Qualifying Interests and detail of connectivity to proposed works.

Site Name & Code	Qualifying interests	Distance from site	Connectivity to Project
River Boyne & River Blackwater SAC 002299	• Alkaline Fens [7230] • Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion)[91E0] • *Lampetra fluviatalis* (River Lamprey) [1099] • *Salmo salar* (Salmon) [1106] • *Lutra lutra* (Otter) [1355]	0.82km	European site is not connected to the proposed works area. Works site does not contain any habitat relevant to the SAC or suitability for any listed QI species.
River Boyne & River Blackwater SPA 004232	• Alcedo atthis (Kingfisher) [A229]	0.9km	SPA is not connected to the proposed works area, nor does it contain any habitat suitable for the listed QI species.

As the proposed residential development will be connected to existing mains services for water supply and foul water disposal, no operational impacts are expected from the project.

No risk to the conservation objectives of any other Natura 2000 designated sites (i.e. further than the above) is considered likely due to one or more of the following:

- Lack of connectivity between the works areas and the designated areas
- Distance between the designated areas and the works area and/or;
- No significant change to chemical or physiological condition of any designated site as a result of the proposed development

These other sites are therefore not considered further in this screening exercise. The following section, (Section 3) comprises the screening assessment and statement.

3 Article 6(3) Screening Assessment

This section of the report focuses solely on the potential for the proposed works to impact on any Natura 2000 sites and their conservation objectives. The potential for effects to these Natura 2000 sites is considered further below.

3.1 Article 6(3) Assessment Criteria

Description of the individual elements of the project likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.

None of the individual elements of the proposed development as planned are likely to give rise to significant impacts on any Natura 2000 site, given: the lack of connectivity to any designated site, the limited scale of the works, the nature of the works and the distance between the proposed development and any designated site.

Description of any Likely Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts of the Project on the Natura 2000 Site.

Any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the proposed development, both alone and in combination with other plans or projects, on any Natura 2000 sites by virtue of the following criteria: size and scale, land take, distance from the Natura 2000 site or key feature thereof, resource requirements, emissions, excavation requirements, transportation requirements and duration of construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the works are detailed in the table below.

Table 5: Assessment of Likely Impacts

ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY IMPACTS	
Size and scale	The proposed works will be carried out within a total area comprising some 0.0973 hectares. As such, there will be no impact on any Natura 2000 sites owing to the size or scale of the proposed works.
Land-take	No work will take place within the boundary of any Natura 2000 site. As such land-take is nil.
Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;	The nearest Natura 2000 sites to the proposed development are River Boyne & River Blackwater SAC and River Boyne & River Blackwater SPA which are 0.82km and 0.9km from the site respectively.
Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);	No materials for construction will be sourced from within any Natura 2000 site. No water will be abstracted from any designated site.

Emissions (disposal to land, water or air);	There will be no additional emissions to land, air or water beyond those typical of any small-scale path upgrade project. No emissions are likely to have any likely significant effects upon the conservation objectives of the SAC or SPA.
Excavation requirements;	No excavation or extraction requirement exists within the boundary of any designated site or in areas with hydrological connectivity to any designated site.
Transportation requirements;	Site has existing access via a regional road and a local road. No other means of access will be required during any phase of the project that would impact upon any Natura 2000 site.
Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;	Duration of works are not known at time of writing. Owning to the size and scale of the project it is unlikely to take more than 12 months.
Timing of works	Not known at time of writing.. However given the scale, location and nature of the proposed development. No impacts on any species or habitats are predicted as a result of the proposed timing of works.
Cumulative or In-combination Impacts with other Projects and Plans	A desktop planning application search, using publicly available data from Meath County Council's ePlan database and MyPlan.ie's National Planning Application database was undertaken. No relevant planning applications for the adjacent townlands were found within the last 5 years. No projects that could have cumulative or in combination impacts with the proposed works at Pitcher Lane were found.

3.2 Description of any Likely Changes to the Natura 2000 Sites

Any likely changes to the Natura 2000 site are described in the table below with reference to the following criteria: reduction of habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, changes in key indicators of conservation value and climate change.

Table 6: Likely changes to the Nature 2000 site

Likely Changes to the Natura 2000 Site	
Reduction of habitat area	Works will not change the overall size of any Natura 2000 site.

Disturbance to key species	Works do not have the potential to lead to the disturbance of any protected species for which either designated site has received its designation.
Habitat or species fragmentation	Works do not have the potential to lead to habitat or species fragmentation within the Natura 2000 sites.
Reduction in species density	Works do not have the potential to lead to a reduction in species density in any Natura 2000 site.
Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);	Works will not lead to changes in any key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.) which any Natura 2000 site must maintain to uphold good conversation status.
Climate change	No negative effects to any sites as a result of or in combination with climate change are predicted as a consequence of the proposed works.

3.2.1 Likelihood of Interference with the key relationships that define the structure and function of the Natura 2000 Site as a whole:

It is considered that there will be no impacts of any scale, significance or duration arising from these works or from the operation of this project, upon the key relationships that define the structure and function of any Natura 2000 site.

3.2.2 Indicators of Significance as a Result of the Identification of Effects

Indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects as set out below in terms of loss, fragmentation, disruption, disturbance and changes to the key elements of site.

Table 7: Indicators of significance

Indicators of Significance	
Loss	None predicted
Fragmentation	No habitat fragmentation to any Natura 2000 site is predicted.
Disruption	No significant risk of disruption to any Natura 2000 site is predicted
Disturbance	Works do not have the potential to cause disturbance to any Natura 2000 site.
Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.)	No changes to any key elements of any Natura 2000 site is predicted.

Description of any Likely Significant Impacts or Indeterminate Impacts of the Project on the Natura 2000 Site

Based on a consideration of the likely impacts arising from the proposed development as described above no likely significant or indeterminate impacts or effects have been identified to any Natura 2000 site as a result of the proposed development.

3.3 Findings of Article 6(3) Screening Assessment

Name of project or plan: Proposed Residential Development at Pitcher Lane, Kells, Co. Meath.

Name and location of Natura 2000 Site: Nearest Natura 2000 sites are River Boyne & River Blackwater SAC (Site Code 002299) and River Boyne & River Blackwater SPA (Site Code 004232). These are at a remove of 0.82km and 0.9km respectively.

Description of project or plan: This a proposed residential project. It will involve the demolition of an existing derelict dwelling and the development of 5 no. units, being: 4 no. apartments in a terrace. and a detached dwelling.

Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?: The project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 site.

Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)? On the basis that the proposed project will have no impacts on any Natura 2000 sites and no other project or plan that could have significant effects has been identified, no cumulative or in-combination impacts are predicted.

3.3.1 Assessment of Significance of Effects

Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site:

The proposed project will not significantly affect any Natura 2000 sites. Works and operation of the completed road will not impact the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site the reasons outlined below:

Explain why these effects are not considered significant.

There will be no direct significant impacts upon the Natura 2000 sites as:

- There are no Natura 2000 sites with hydrological connectivity to the proposed development. Hence there is no source-pathway-receptor chain.
- The size and scale of the works are small
- No operational impacts of the completed amenities may reasonably be expected given the proposed connection of the dwellings to mains services.

Indirect impacts upon the Natura 2000 Site:

No indirect impact to any Natura 2000 site are predicted for the reasons outlined below:

- No emissions from the site have a complete source-pathway-receptor route to any Natura 2000 site.
- No operational impacts may be expected (as described above)

Explain why these effects are not considered significant.

- As there is no source-pathway-receptor chain, no significant changes in the chemical of physical composition of any Natura 2000 site are likely as a result of the construction or operation of the proposed development.
- No significant impacts to habitats or species upon which any of the qualifying interests of the SAC or SPA rely upon will be impacted upon as a result of the proposed development**.**

Cumulative or in-combination impacts

As no direct or indirect impacts have been identified, no cumulative or in-combination impacts are therefore possible.

Residual Impacts

No residual impacts are predicted.

Consultation with Agencies

- As detailed previously in report

3.4 Data collected to carry out the assessment.

The following sources of data were employed:

- Environmental Protection Agency mapping database
- Historical OSI Maps
- NPWS protected species database and online mapping
- Meath County Council Planning Database (ePlan)

Level of assessment completed.

- Desk Study
- Site visit & Survey in August 2022
- Fossitt Level III Habitat Recording

Overall Conclusions

In view of the best and objective scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the European sites reviewed in the screening exercise, the proposed development as described here, individually/in combination with other plans and projects (either directly or indirectly) is not likely to have any significant effects on any of the European sites. Therefore, it is recommended to Meath County Council that Appropriate Assessment is not required.

4 References and Guidance Documents

DoEHLG. (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Project in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities, Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

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Fossitt, J.A. (2000) *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.

JNCC. (2007). *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, UK.

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Parnell, J. & Curtis, T. (2012). *Webb's An Irish Flora.* Cork University Press, Cork.

Wyse Jackson, M., FitzPatrick, Ú., Cole, E., Jebb, M., McFerran, D., Sheehy Skeffington, M. & Wright, M. (2016) Ireland Red List No. 10: Vascular Plants. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Dublin, Ireland.

Appendix A

Fig. 1. Area proposed for development shown in orange shaded area. Base mapping from maps.archaeology.ie

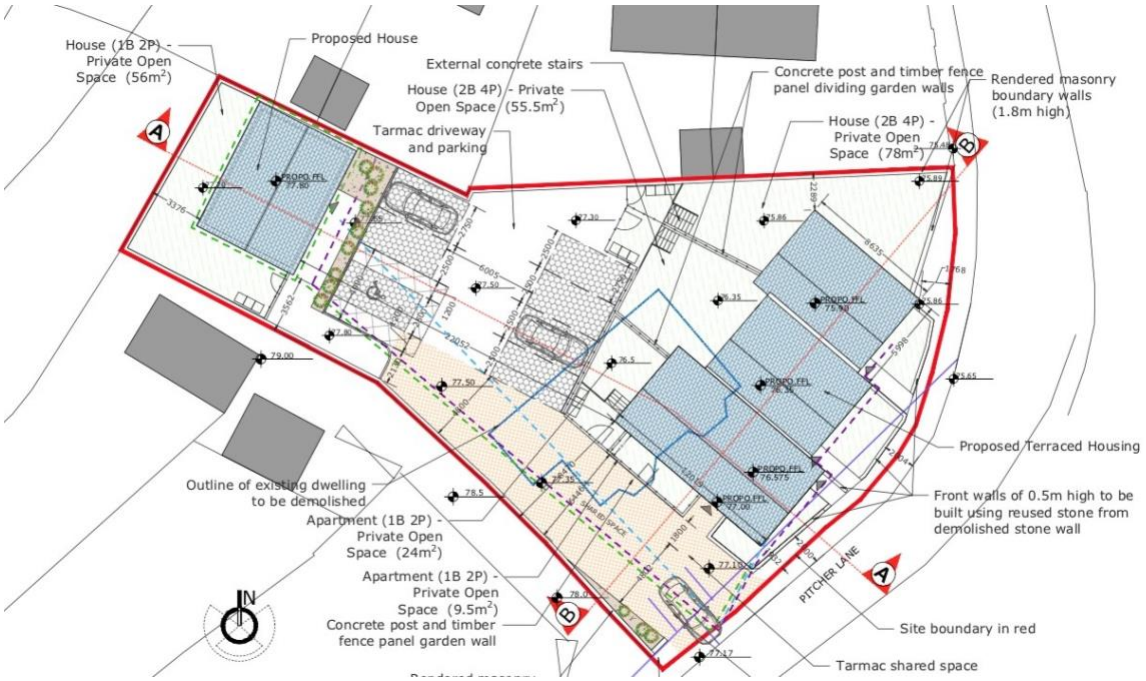

Fig. 2. Detail of residential development proposed. Red line shows boundary of proposed works. From Drawing No. P01 DP 21-38 by Craftstudio Architects.

Appendix B: Some photographs of Site

Fig. 1. Mature Birch treeline to north of site.

Fig. 2. Front of derelict building showing extensive areas of roof missing and collapsed.

Fig. 3. Mature Leyland Cypress treeline along road frontage.